FREEDOM WATCH

The Citizens Project Newsletter

Vol. 2, No. 1 Feb.-March 1993

WHO WE ARE

In the Pikes Peak area, we are seeing a push toward prayer in the schools, pressure to modify school curriculum to reflect religious views, the rise of stealth candidates in elections, increased anti-gay activity, and growing religious intolerance. Citizens Project was formed to challenge these trends.

We represent citizens from a broad spectrum of political parties and religious beliefs who are concerned about these threats to our constitutional freedoms by local sectarian and political extremists.

We are dedicated to maintaining the traditional American values of separation of church and state, freedom of religion and speech, pluralism, individuality, and tolerance and compassion for others.

We invite you to participate in this process with us. ◆

CITIZENS PROJECT
Box 2085
Colorado Springs, CO 80901
(719) 685-9899

Amy Divine and Doug Triggs
Coordinators

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CHRISTIAN COALITION FORMS COLORADO SPRINGS CHAPTER

Pat Robertson's Virginia-based Christian Coalition has now formed a Colorado Springs chapter. At a January meeting at Village Seven Presbyterian Church, a group (including the head of the Colorado state-wide Christian Coalition) agreed to establish the Colorado Springs chapter.

Of the various organizations working to "Christianize America" by placing far right members in local political office and on school boards, Christian Coalition is the largest and best financed. Their arrival here should make our local political scene even more interesting.

Christian Coalition currently has approximately 250,000 members and 550 chapters in 50 states. This national group has a stated objective to "mobilize and train Christians for effective political action" in order to reverse "encroaching secularism..and reaffirm our Godly heritage". Among other things, Christian Coalition supports school vouchers, school prayer and term limitations, and opposes gay rights, abortion rights and promotion of safe sex. Their Colorado newsletter states that "there should be absolutely no separation of church and state in America". Christian Coalition's traditional values agenda extends against equal rights: A recent Robertson fund-raising letter stated that the Iowa ERA initiative was part of "a feminist agenda...that encourages women to leave their husbands, kill their children, practice witchcraft, destroy capitalism, and become lesbians."

(more about Christian Coalition on page 10)

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CLARIFICATION AMENDMENT OFFERED

Finally, there seems to be a solution to the Amendment 2 crisis. A local group, Come Together Colorado, and attorney Greg Walta have prepared a new constitutional amendment to outlaw "special rights" such as job quotas and affirmative action for gays and lesbians, while also outlawing discrimination in housing, employment and public accommodations based on sexual orientation. This proposed new amendment would completely replace the existing Amendment 2.

This proposed amendment contains what both sides in the Amendment 2 campaign said that they wanted: no discrimination, no special rights. This amendment, if passed, should satisfy both sides, and should end the boycott of Colorado. This amendment will let us all get on with our lives.

(More about the amendment on page 12)

REPORT ON OUR GENERAL MEETING

The January 24 Citizens Project General Meeting was held at the Colorado Springs Fine Arts Center. An enthusiastic overflow crowd attended. Citizens Project Steering Committee members gave brief talks on the status and future plans for Citizens Project. Following that, audience members asked questions and made statements. A few local politicians attended the meeting and spoke from the audience.

During the meeting, many shared their concern for tolerance and diversity, and indicated that the meeting gave them a sense of belonging and renewal. Others said the meeting was like a "pep rally" and showed the possibility of a new "political force" in this area.

A number of people have volunteered to act in the new coordinator positions in Citizens Project. Their energy will help Citizens Project to grow and expand our range of activities.

Attendees at the meeting gave generously to Citizens Project. Those that gave by check should have already received a thank you note from Citizens Project. To all who gave cash, we thank you now. Your donations make the work of Citizens Project possible.

We will schedule another General Meeting in June. ◆

CP CALENDAR

"Get Involved" Seminar-February 20
(see opposite page for details)
"Imposed Morality" Seminar-Feb. 21
(see page 6 for details)
Introductory Meeting----------March 9
Introductory Meeting----------April 1
Introductory meetings for new CP participants are at 7 PM at the Unitarian Church, 730 N. Tejon.

NEWS BRIEFS OF INTEREST

Woodland Park "Mythology" Lawsuit Appealed. In May 1992 a group of Woodland Park parents filed a lawsuit in Teller County in an attempt to have the Bible taught in Woodland Park schools, on the grounds that the religion of "mythology" was already being taught there as part of a literature class. This case was dismissed by the Teller County District Court judge as being "frivolous". Rev. Skipworth, president of Woodland Park Cowboys For Christ and one of the parents, has now appealed this dismissal to the Colorado Court of Appeals. We will keep you informed about this case.

Telluride Schools Survive Challenge. A conservative Christian group in Telluride, the Public School Awareness Committee, complained to the Telluride School Board that religion was being taught in the Telluride schools. Specifically, they complained that a mental imagery exercise called Brain Gym was a religion and should be banned. After study, the school board found that guided mental imagery was not a religion. However, the school board made provision for children not wanting to participate in the exercise to have other activities available to them.

Church/State Debate. The Colorado Family Coalition-sponsored debate on the "myth of separation of church and state" took place at Colorado College January 25. The lecture hall was packed with over 200 people. The debate was moderated by Amber Jorgensen and featured three advocates (mostly attorneys) for each side. The debate provided a rich education in arguments about the church-state issue. The audience, however, appeared to be strongly against the idea that separation of church and state in America should be a "myth".

New Name. Amber Jorgensen's Colorado Family Coalition, a relatively new local Colorado Springs group closely allied to the right-wing group Citizens For Excellence In Education (whose local chapter is also headed by Amber Jorgensen), has changed its name. The Colorado Family Coalition has now become the **Colorado Issues Coalition**, although the politics of the group remain the same.

CFV Publishes Newsletter. Colorado For Family Values has begun publishing a regular newsletter called "Fairness Watch: The Voice of Amendment 2". To keep in close touch with their agenda, you can ask them to put you on their mailing list: write Colorado For Family Values, Box 190, Colorado Springs, CO 80901. If you are going to be in Boulder February 26, you can attend the first CFV Community Action Seminar--"A concentrated course in countering the militant homosexual agenda in your community"--at Bethany Church. For more information on the Boulder seminar, call CFV's contact, Mr. Glen Liberty, at (303) 499-4804.

(more news briefs on page 8)

OUR REPUBLICAN PARTY

By Jeanne Matthews, citizen advocate

Jeanne Matthews is a life-long Republican and Colorado Springs political activist. She recently attended one of the first Republican county-level issues forum. The El Paso Republicans will soon be having one of their own issues forums here to discuss and perhaps resolve differences among themselves.

The Christian Coalition (CC) and other associated Religious Right (RR) political activists are dedicated to forcing an evangelical social agenda on the American public, and the vehicle to achieve this end is the Republican Party. Caucus by caucus, county by county, state by state, CC and RR legions are busy getting themselves elected to GOP party positions on a local level and then working for right wing conservatives in Republican primary races.

These fundamentalist evangelicals have been so successful because their techniques are pragmatic and technically advanced. They have successfully taken over control of Republican Party organizations in over fifteen states. El Paso County almost lost one seat in the state legislature to a RR candidate in November, and Boulder and Jefferson counties did lose three seats to them.

A short time ago I attended a Republican issues forum in an adjacent county, the purpose of which was to air differences and try to unite in a spirit of communication and cooperation. Many attendees made a sincere effort, but here are some of the remarks made by RR panelists: "Do not ask members of the Religious Right to separate their religion from their politics. We cannot. This is who we are." "We have the truth and moral fiber on our side." "We must legislate morality." "Single issue voting must stop (regarding abortion), but do not ask us to shut up about it." It was pretty obvious that any bending was not going to be from that side.

Unless moderate Republicans forge an alliance to defeat theocrats and rebuild their party to stand for tolerance, liberty and justice for all, Pat Robertson will achieve his goal of total control of the party in 1996. Whether a third party is then born will depend upon actions taken this year by our citizens.

What can we do here in El Paso County? We are stuck with the caucus system for now, and that means we must get people out to those meetings. Since primaries are the elections here, we must get voters to the caucuses, county assemblies and state conventions. Democrats will have to change their party just for the primaries (a very simple procedure and easily reversed), and we must educate the independents that they are disenfranchising themselves.

City Council elections will be held in just two months. These are totally non-partisan. Know your district, become acquainted with all candidates from the district, and make sure you attend at least one "candidates" night. If you don't become informed, you have no right to complain later. ◆

CITIZENS PROJECT "GET INVOLVED" SEMINAR

Citizens Project will host an information-packed "Get Involved" seminar to provide information about opportunities to become involved in our community. The seminar will be Saturday February 20 at the First Congregational Church (corner of North Tejon and St. Vrain). Space is still available, so call to reserve a seat.

We will talk about local political parties, city government, our state legislature, and school-related opportunities to be involved.

Speakers include Daphne Greenwood (District 17 state rep.), Mary Ellen McNally (former city council member), lobbyist Maria Garcia Berry, school board member Lynn Peterson, and school administrator Norvelle Simpson.

Keynote speakers are Denver Post editor Chuck Green who will speak on the editorial process and policies of the Post, and Republican candidate Sharon Klusman, who ran in the Jefferson County Republican primary against Reverend Brian Day.

The all-day seminar will start at 9AM. We will have morning and afternoon breaks to allow you to meet and talk with other participants.

Child care will be available on site, but you must call the Citizens Project office prior to the seminar to make reservations for child care.

Cost is $10 if we receive your phone or written reservation prior to the seminar; $12 at the door.

If you have questions or are interested in attending, please call Citizens Project. ◆

THERE'S ROOM FOR EVERYONE

in Colorado Springs

Colorado Springs is a city of rich and growing diversity. It's a place that has always welcomed people of varied ethnic origins, religious beliefs, lifestyles, and points of view.

We value the free and open exchange of ideas, the rights of individuals to their own beliefs and values, economic opportunity for all citizens, and fairness and equity under the law.

We urge the citizens of Colorado Springs to uphold this century-old tradition of tolerance, and to celebrate the diversity of our community. There's room for everyone in the Springs.

Colorado Springs Chamber of Commerce

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ORDER YOUR "CELEBRATE DIVERSITY" BUTTONS HERE!

Citizens Project has ordered new "Celebrate Diversity" buttons. These 1 3/4" diameter buttons have white letters on a blue background.

These buttons are available from the Citizens Project office. Cost is two for one dollar. Simply send us one dollar, and we will send you two of our new buttons. Our address is Citizens Project, Box 2085, Colorado Springs, CO 80901.

FREE FROM CITIZENS PROJECT

The following materials are available free from Citizens Project:

- Our "Celebrate Diversity" bumper stickers.
- The "Hocus Focus" article.
- The "What's Wrong With The Religious Right" article.
- The "Protecting The Freedom To Learn: A Citizen's Guide" booklet.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Political Skills Development Workshop. Steven Moss & Associates will present a workshop entitled "Organizing For Social Change in the 90's: A Skill Development Workshop For the Politically Active". This workshop will be held March 13 from 8:45AM to 4PM in the New Community Room of the Rustic Hills Shopping Center (3989 Palmer Park Boulevard). Cost is $35 if received by March 6, $40 after that date. You can register by sending your name, address, phone, organizational affiliation and registration fee to Steven Moss and Associates, 3300 Arapahoe Road, #216, Boulder, CO 80303; phone (303) 444-6090.

New Amendment 2 Groups. Two new groups have formed in opposition to the discriminatory aspects of Amendment 2. **Pueblo After 2** (Box 1602, Pueblo, CO 81002; phone 719-543-7981) meets the first Monday of every month at Barkman Branch Library in Pueblo. **Common Decency Coalition** has formed in Grand Junction. You can contact them at Box 3335, Grand Junction, CO 81502; phone (303) 858-3748.

Totalitarianism Lecture. UCCS will present a lecture Sunday, March 7 on "Jewish History and the Torment of Totalitarianism". The lecture will start at

(more announcements on page 5)

A "VITAL" RESPONSE TO THE POLITICALLY ACTIVE RELIGIOUS RIGHT

David Bruce, one our our Citizen Project members, wrote an article entitled "What's Wrong With the Religious Right". In his article Dave analyzes the claims of some of the religious right groups and discusses how to respond responsibly. The following excerpt discusses his concept of an appropriate response to these politically active religious right groups. If you would like a copy of his complete article, call the Citizens Project office at 685-9899.

What can we do? We can't ignore them [the politically active religious right groups]--we and those we care about have too much to lose. We can't fight them--letting our anger and frustration out plays directly into the hands of our adversaries; they strive to be models of good citizenship; they've learned a lot from the likes of Hargis, Swaggert and Baker; it's unlikely they'll get caught with their fingers in the cookie jar. We can't even join them--their loyalty oath would exclude most of us. Even dialogue with them is problematic; their views and values render them untrustworthy. Their standard of truth is scriptural consistency, not objective, empirical evidence or logical coherence. As our experience with the campaign they waged in support of Amendment 2 attests, they are ready, willing, and able to misrepresent themselves and their beliefs for the purposes of social or political expediency.

We are unlikely to change them; we must accept responsibility for changing ourselves. There is little we can do directly to persuade them that sex education does not encourage promiscuity, condoms do not spread AIDS, the legal availability of abortions does not increase teenage pregnancies, homosexuals are not out to recruit their children, humanists are not out to destroy their families, and tolerance is not really a dirty word. These are their beliefs, and we can't change them until they start looking at evidence and listening to reason. As I said, what we can change is ourselves: we must become **VITAL**. We must renew our commitment to be active participants in a free and constitutional democracy; we must reclaim our roles and responsibilities as "citizens". For me, each of the five letters in the word VITAL serves as a reminder for what I must do to contribute as a citizen: **V - Visible**; **I - Informed**; **T - Truthful**; **A - Accountable**; and **L - Liberal**.

Thomas Jefferson once said all tyranny needs to gain a foothold is for people of good conscience to remain silent. The two-to-one margin of victory Amendment 2 received in this community [Colorado Springs] has given license to some to openly express their narrow-minded and hate-filled bigotry in even public settings and over the public airways. When we sit silently, others assume we're condoning or concurring with these opinions. The voices of love and reason are soft but extremely powerful. Living in this town gives each of us many opportunities to exercise our commitment to traditional values such as liberty, tolerance and cultural diversity. Each of us in this way must become more **Visible**...

(more about VITAL on page 9)

ANNOUNCEMENTS

(continued from page 4)

2PM at the Alumni Room at the University Center at UCCS. There is no charge for this lecture. For more information, call 593-3576.

Charlie King Performance. Charlie King--musical storyteller, political satirist, folk singer, and songwriter--will perform Sunday, March 14 at 8 PM at All Souls Unitarian Church, 730 North Tejon. Tickets are $7 ($4 for low-income) and are available at Daily Planet Options Store, Independent Records (both locations) and at the door. Proceeds from the concert will benefit Colorado Springs Minority Coalition, Daily Planet Options Store, Ground Zero, NOW, the Pikes Peak Justice and Peace Commission, and Citizens Project. For more information, call 632-6189.

NOW Workshop. El Paso NOW will be holding a workshop highlighting victimization avoidance techniques for everyone on Saturday, Feb. 27 from 9AM to 1PM at First Congregational Church, Tejon & St. Vrain. Cost is $15 per person. For more information and registration, call NOW at 570-1153.

Report Hate Crimes. The Pikes Peak Gay and Lesbian Community Center is sponsoring a hate crime reporting and statistics project through their Help Line. To make a report of a hate crime (including harassment and verbal slurs), call them at 471-4429. You should also call your local police department and make a report. Be sure and get the name of the police officer to whom you make the report, and get the report number.

Racism Workshops. The Institute To Create Patterns of Unity holds 8-week workshops to learn about and help eliminate racism. To learn when their next workshop series starts, call them at 598-6090. ◆

SCHOOL DAYS

Citizens Project is tracking a number of interesting school incidents.

Incidents in Districts 11, 20 and 38 now being investigated for later reporting are: distribution of religious literature by a school employee to students during school hours, inquiries into teachers' spiritual preferences by parents, rejection of a biology text which stated that "creation science" was a pseudo-science, a guest lecturer in a local high school class promoting the benefits of a local ministry and showing an unrelated film by them, and a local administrator removing books from the school library in disregard to district policy.

If you have information on these or similar incidents or would like to volunteer as a school activist, call Citizens Project at 685-9899.

If you would like a free copy of the People for the American Way booklet, "Protecting the Freedom to Learn: A Citizen's Guide", please call our office at 685-9899. ◆

SEMINAR ON IMPOSED MORALITY SCHEDULED

A seminar will be held Sunday February 21 from 2-4 PM on "Imposed Morality: Where Will It Lead?" Topics are censorship, Amendment 2, the effect of religious groups in politics, and separation of church and state. Speakers are James Joy (ACLU), Bernard Margolis (Pikes Peak Library), Norman Kripke (ADL), and Marcy Morrison (Co. Representative).

This seminar will be held in Gaylord Hall, in the Worner Student Center (corner of Cascade and Cache la Poudre) at Colorado College. ◆

NO "HOLY WARS" IN AMERICA

Citizens Project received the following letter from a Colorado Springs resident who had previously experienced religious extremism in Iran. Here is his letter:

My name is Bijan Pirnia. I'm an Iranian immigrant. I've been living among you for about seven years. I appreciate the opportunity I have been given to share with you some of my experiences and the lessons I have learned from them.

Being from Iran, I have seen the disastrous consequences of the fusing or mixing of religion and state. I have seen some acts of human degradation that I hope no one ever has to see. I have seen innocent human beings being ostracized, banished, or even shot to death on the streets just because they were different. And I have seen people's freedom being taken away or severely restricted in the name of God, religion, or morality--all the result of hatred, intolerance, and self-righteousness. On several occasions, my family and I have been the victims of religious intolerance and hatred. It is for that reason that I'm terribly disturbed by the activities of the Religious Right in our community. I have seen what happens when religion and state make what I call an unholy alliance. This is not merely my observation; history is full of examples that illustrate clearly how dangerous that unholy alliance can be. The Dark Age of Inquisition in European Countries is only one such example.

About ten years ago, I fled my home country and left everything behind to get away from the religious dictatorship and the Islamic theocracy of Ayatollah Khomani and his cronies. I came to this country to live in peace and freedom and be a useful member of this free society. I did not come here to live under a Christian theocracy or a Christian government.

I highly respect the principles upon which this great nation is founded, principles like respect for the individual, appreciation or at least the tolerance of opposing viewpoints, protection of minorities, and especially the separation of church and state. In international news, we sometimes hear of hatred that is raging between Catholics and Protestants in Ireland or ethnic cleansing in Bosnia or the massacring of religious minorities in some other part of our world. But it comforts me to think that during the entire two-hundred-and-four year history of this country, we've never had religious persecution, state-sponsored terrorism, crusades or so-called "holy" wars.

As a new American citizen, I will do everything I can to make sure it stays that way. In the way I treat others and conduct my life, I will see to it that the above-mentioned principles our country is founded upon are upheld. If I ever get married and have children, I would want them to be brought up in a loving, nurturing, and hate-free environment because I have seen the alternative, and believe me, it was not pleasant.

(More about holy wars on page 11)

INSIDE CITIZENS PROJECT

CP Arts Group Forms. The new Citizens Project arts coordinator, Gary King, would like to hear from fellow Citizen Project artists. "We'll call ourselves Artists United For Diversity," he says. He is looking forward to doing a show in the future, and also selling donated art pieces to raise money for Citizens Project. If you are interested in this arts group, you can write him: Artists United/Citizens Project, Box 2085, Colorado Springs, CO 80901. He requests, if possible, that you include a slide or photo of your work.

Moving the CP Office. We are in the process of finding permanent office space for the Citizens Project office and staff. We envision a library room, a staff room, a computer room, and a meeting room. This move will make Citizens Project more accessible to everyone. If you know of suitable office space, please give us a call. Our mailing address will stay the same.

New CP-type Groups. Two new "Citizens Project" type groups have started in other areas of Colorado. The goal of Ft. Collins' **Moderate Voters Project** is to help voters become informed by revealing "campaigns that undermine our political process and hide extremist agendas from mainstream voters." They can be contacted at Box 270263, Ft. Collins, CO 80527; phone (303) 229-0107. A new group, **Western Citizens Coalition**, is to encompass the entire western slope. You can contact them at Box 2191, Telluride, CO 81435-2191; phone: (303) 882-7144. A Denver group is expected to form shortly.

Newsletter Distribution Opportunities. For the past several issues of our newsletter, we have been placing copies with Pikes Peak area businesses to display and give away to their patrons. If you have space and would like to display Freedom Watch (and/or Celebrate Diversity bumper stickers) in your business or organization, please call the Citizens Project office, and we will bring them to you.

Electronic Communication. Our Freedom Watch Newsletter is available for electronic distribution via computer modem. Our last newsletter can be accessed through the local BBS Jackpot! at 570-6118 and via anonymous ftp through the Internet at csn.org:/Citizens_Project/9212newslet.txt. This newsletter will also be available soon. Right now, a number of computer bulletin boards around town have Citizens Project discussion sections. Perhaps in the near future we will be able to have our own Citizens Project BBS.

More Bumper Stickers. We're delighted to see many "Celebrate Diversity" bumper stickers on the cars around town. Let's keep the message mobile. We have plenty of bumper stickers--just call us if you need more.

(more Inside Citizens Project on page 11)

AN IMPORTANT LETTER

Citizens Project received this letter, which has a message for us all.

As former Christian fundamentalists we feel it is very important that there be another very verbal voice in Colorado Springs. For the most part we liked what we heard at the meeting [the January 7 CP Introductory meeting].

However, there was one statement that concerned me in particular. One of the citizens in the audience spoke about being pro-active so that we could "crush the religious right". I guess my question is, is that what we are all about?

My impression from listening to the board members that spoke that night, was that CP was formed to counteract the religious right agenda, to challenge their agenda in responsive and responsible ways, not counter attack it in reactionary ways that only incite and perpetuate more hatred and intolerance, thus polarizing us more.

The idea of "Celebrating Diversity" means that the fundamentalists also have a "right" to their views in our society. As I see it, we are challenging their "right" to impose those views on the rest of us in legal and political ways, so that we don't have to suffer the consequences of their intolerance and hatred.

Hopefully we can all meet this challenge with courage, clarity and compassion.

Bill and Chris Kennedy ◆

NEWS BRIEFS

(continued from page 2)

Chamber of Commerce Diversity Campaign. The Colorado Springs Chamber of Commerce has a new advertising campaign to promote tolerance and diversity, and we have reproduced their campaign display on page 4 of our newsletter. They also have a new red, white and blue bumper sticker with a "Room for Everyone" slogan; you can give them a call at 635-1551, and they will be glad to send you one.

$400 Burning A Hole In Your Pocket? IDEA Institute is sponsoring a three-day conference in Denver May 3-5 called "Responding Democratically to Religious Agendas: Right-Wing Pressure Groups and School Reform". This conference, for school administrators and teachers, will examine pressures on schools by ultra-conservative religious groups and appropriate responses. Cost is $397 per participant. Citizens Project has information and application forms.

New Push Against Pornography. The December 1992 report from the Rocky Mountain Family Council noted that the RMFC had drafted a proposed amendment to the Colorado Constitution to ban obscenity and pornography. This may be on our next November ballot.

Chuck Asay Appears Nationwide. Gazette-Telegraph political cartoonist Chuck Asay, whose cartoons appear daily in our local newspaper, has a nationwide audience. His cartoons have been reproduced in the American Family Association's Journal, World magazine (a biweekly published by God's World Publications), and Focus on the Family's monthly Citizen magazine. ◆

SUSTAINING SUPPORT GROUP

If you are on our mailing list, your newsletter contains a "Citizen Sustaining Support Group" blue pledge card. In order to put Citizens Project on a predictable funding level and to move away from endless donation requests, we have established a system for periodic gifts to Citizens Project. The blue pledge card is the mechanism for this. This is the same blue pledge card that was passed around at the January General Meeting, so you may have already seen it.

The blue pledge card has options for monthly and semiannual giving. Simply check the options that you desire, and return the blue card to Citizens Project. Please remember that because we are an advocacy organization, your donations are not tax deductible.

If your newsletter did not contain a blue pledge card, please give Citizens Project a call, and we will send one out to you.

We have said it before, but it is no less true now--your support is what keeps Citizen Project going and growing. ◆

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SCHOLARSHIP ANNOUNCED

Citizens Project is pleased to announce the creation of a scholarship to honor a high school senior in the Pikes Peak Region whose unique work has improved our community and his/her school by helping to establish a social environment which recognizes and emphasizes diversity.

The first scholarship, to be awarded in late spring beginning this year, will be in memory of the late Arthur Ashe, a person of honor and grace, who in the last year of his life once again overcame adversity and expanded his and our social conscience.

Donations for the scholarship are now being accepted. Contributors for each year's scholarship will be honored at the presentation of that scholarship. If you wish to contribute, please send your gift to Citizens Project, Box 2085, Colorado Springs, CO 80901. Make the check payable to the Citizens Project Scholarship Fund. Citizens Project hopes that this annual scholarship will be on the order of $1000.00 per year.

High school seniors who wish to apply for the scholarship, or those who wish to nominate a senior for this scholarship, should contact Citizens Project for the scholarship rules and guidelines and an application form. ◆

VITAL RESPONSE

(continued from page 5)

Being courageous is not enough; we also must be **Informed**. Without knowledge, we might even find ourselves being persuaded by the simple solutions the religious right proposes.

Equally dangerous is the problem of automatically opposing any position simply on the knowledge that it has been proposed by the religious right. We cannot let others do our thinking for us. What kind of God would give us a mind and not expect us to use it? We must learn to cherish our doubts and actively seek answers to our questions by conducting our own research and constructing our own arguments.

VITAL:
Visible
Informed
Truthful
Accountable
Liberal

Some of the material put out by the religious right contains useful data and revealing arguments. It's hard to form our own opinions if we are unfamiliar with alternative arguments and perspectives. It is, however, a mistake to take their publications at face value: they will not hesitate to cite articles that have never been published or ones written by PhDs who've been censored by professional societies for academic fraud; they lift quotations out of context to distort their meaning; and often seek only the most outrageous representatives or spokespersons to characterize the views of those who oppose them.

Isn't it appropriate to fight fire with fire? Shouldn't we put our heads together and create the most compelling counterarguments to their claims in order to persuade the masses of their infamy?

Before you say "yes!", stop for a moment and consider your assumptions about other human beings. If you share the assumptions of these new age grand inquisitors [the religious right], then such a strategy might make sense. Their religion teaches that humankind is naturally sinful and incapable of thoughtful reflection.

Time and again at the Community Impact Seminar [the Focus on the Family/Rocky Mountain Family Council November seminar at Pulpit Rock Church--see our article in the last newsletter], we were reminded that most of us can't really think but can "only rearrange our prejudices".

On the other hand, if you begin with more positive assumptions about humankind, then creating misleading propaganda is inconsistent. We must be consistent; we must be honest; we must be **Truthful**. We must make every effort to listen objectively to evidence from all sources and fairly represent both sides of arguments and alternative positions.

We cannot resist religious tyranny by ourselves becoming narrow-minded bigots. (Besides someone must teach the religious fanatics the importance of ethical behavior to a free society.)

We must also be **Accountable**. Although we may not agree that being human is synonymous with being sinful, we also recognize that it is not the same as being perfect. Making mistakes seems to be one of the most common characteristics of the human condition (at least as I've experienced it). When mistakes occur we must admit them and then work to redress any harm we have done.

Unlike those on the religious right who don't make mistakes because the Bible is the absolute, exclusive, and inerrant word of God (and they have many worthy clergy to interpret it for them), we're stuck with having to make decisions under considerable uncertainty. Our knowledge is often incomplete and our principles somewhat fallible.

(VITAL ends on page 11)

CHRISTIAN COALITION

(continued from page 1)

Tactically, Christian Coalition has championed the stealth approach to politics, targeting lower offices with traditionally low voter turnout and training candidates to garner support and turn out voters through like-minded churches while avoiding the larger public. By taking control of local Republican Party mechanisms, they can claim to simply be "conservative Republicans."

Robertson has said, "we want...as soon as possible to see a working majority of the Republican Party in the hands of pro-family Christians by 1996."

A Pennsylvania Christian Coalition manual states, "[Y]ou should never mention the name Christian Coalition in Republican circles; [however you should] become directly involved in the local Republican Central Committee so that you are an insider ..." From there the manual advises recruiting conservatives for party posts and to run against party moderates.

Although Christian Coalition members were active in Colorado politics in the last election (particularly in the Denver metro area), they have not been organized in Colorado Springs. Now with our new local Christian Coalition chapter, Colorado Springs may see a new and well-financed emphasis on Christian Coalition's traditional methods of voter identification and voter guides.

"America is at a crossroads. Either she returns to her Christian roots ... or she will continue to legalize sodomy, slaughter innocent babies, destroy the minds of her children, squander her resources and sink into oblivion."

Pat Robertson

Christian Coalition has developed a sophisticated survey for targeting voters. If you are called and asked your political affiliation, views on abortion or gay rights, and your main issues of concern, you are probably talking to the Christian Coalition.

If you identify yourself as a Democrat, the conversation will be quite short. If your answers indicate a "family values" perspective, you can anticipate further calls and letters in support of Christian Coalition candidates and issues.

In addition to voter identification, Christian Coalition traditionally creates voter guides for local and school board elections that are distributed through sympathetic area churches immediately before an election.

The Christian Coalition is a well-organized, strategic force. They raised $13 million dollars prior to the November 1992 elections to support "pro-family" candidates and issues, and while radical right candidates did not fare well in Colorado, nationally Christian Coalition won nearly half of their targeted races.

The Christian Coalition's executive director, Ralph Reed, believes the media missed the real story of the 1992 elections by focusing on the number of women who ran for office. According to Reed, "This isn't the year of the woman; this is the year of the Lord."

The Christian Coalition's arrival in Colorado Springs promises to further enliven our local political scene. ◆

Colorado Springs City Council elections are coming up April 6 for the four city council districts (Districts 1, 2, 3, & 4). March 5 is the last day for nominees to file their petitions with the city. This leaves little time to review the candidates. We will produce a Candidate Survey, but also need your help to gather additional information. Please let us know if you have unpublished candidate information, if you are contacted as part of voter identification by phone, or if you are given a Christian Coalition voter guide. We will pass on the information.

VITAL RESPONSE

(continued from page 9)

Once we accept responsibility for making our own decisions, we also become responsible for monitoring the social and human consequences of those decisions. Life is complicated and sometimes things don't go as we intend them to; when that happens we can't ignore our responsibility or blame the outcome on metaphysical others. A willingness to be personally accountable for our decisions is another requisite of democratic citizenship.

And finally we must become more **Liberal**. I realize this word has many meanings, some of which have unpleasant or even pejorative connotations for some of you. What I mean by becoming more liberal is loving liberty more fully and completely; recognizing that whatever rights we might claim for ourselves we must gladly bestow on others.

It also means accepting diversity and working to create systems where women and men of all backgrounds, skin colors and sexual orientations can live together in peace. Becoming more liberal requires us to become more positive in our expectations and more affirming, supportive and loving in our interactions.

Loving liberty means reclaiming our national heritage and actively working with others to create communities which reflect the ideals on which this nation was founded.

The religious right is wrong; becoming vital is not only our right, it is our responsibility. ◆

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HOLY WARS

(continued from page 6)

I would like to end by saying that although I come from a far away country half way around the world, I do not feel like a stranger among you. I feel very close to all of you even though I may not know your name.

I do not believe in superficial barriers that divide us--barriers like nationality, geographical boundaries, man-made religions, and so on.

Although we are individuals, we're also connected to one another in something vast and beautiful beyond description, something that goes into the core and the very essence of existence. Love is the tie that binds us to each other, to the rest of creation, and to something above and beyond the world.

When we look at the Earth from outer space, we don't see any religions, philosophies, or geographical lines separating groups of people. All we see is a beautiful planet that is like an oasis in the dark, infinite space--the planet that is home to us all. Indeed, all humanity is one. Bijan M. Pirnia ◆

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INSIDE CP

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Mailing List. A number of people have wondered if we give out our mailing list to anyone else. The answer is "no"--our mailing list is used for Citizens Project purposes only and is strictly confidential.

By the way, if your name and address are not correct on your mailing label, please let us know.

Focus Response To Our "Hocus Focus". Focus on the Family has prepared a written response to Citizens Project's recent article "Hocus Focus", which discussed the historical and philosophical bases of the religious right. If you want to read their defense--give Focus a call at 531-3391 and ask for their rebuttal to Citizens Project's "Hocus Focus".

If you have not yet received our "Hocus Focus" article, please call Citizens Project at 685-9899. We also have a new eight-page publication called "Why the Religious Right is Wrong" which examines the claims of the religious right in more detail. Both articles are available free from Citizens Project. ◆

CLARIFICATION AMENDMENT *(continued from page 1)*

In its campaign for Amendment 2, Colorado For Family Values stridently opposed any "special rights" for gays and lesbians, but also was careful to state that it supported equal rights and opposed discrimination for those groups. Here are some of their campaign statements:

"Does Amendment 2 write discrimination into the Constitution? No Way! All Amendment 2 does is say "loud and clear" that special, protected civil rights are reserved for legitimate ethnic minorities, who are truly disadvantaged." CFV campaign brochure.

"Amendment 2 means that they [gays and lesbians] will stay equal, not special." CFV campaign flyer.

"EPOC is claiming that after Amendment 2's passage, homosexuals will be '...legislatively barred from asking for or receiving protection from even basic discrimination.' Sound scary? It's designed to. It's also complete nonsense." CFV campaign newsletter.

The new clarification amendment tracks CFV's statements specifically, so that there will be no more confusion. It's simple: no special rights; no discrimination. Will CFV stand by its campaign statements?

More likely, CFV will change its tune. Although its campaign statements were useful in getting Amendment 2 passed, CFV won't feel obligated to act consistently with them. Their new approach to protect "their" Amendment 2 will be this: 1) a claim of discrimination is really a "special right"; 2) you can only claim discrimination if you are a member of a "protected class"; 3) a "protected class" is limited to poor or excluded minorities; and 4) once protection from discrimination is in place, affirmative action and quotas are the automatic result.

The history of local and federal civil rights law in America shows that CFV's arguments are wrong. Existing civil rights laws grant protection from discrimination on many bases, including religion and often marital status. If you belong to a religion and have been granted this discrimination protection, are you therefore a poor or excluded minority? Since religious groups have received protection from discrimination for decades now, where are the affirmative action programs and quotas for religious groups that are supposedly "automatic"? Or, perhaps CFV is arguing that we ought to change these laws to allow America to again discriminate on the basis of religious beliefs, since religions don't meet CFV's standards for discrimination protection. According to CFV's logic, religion doesn't "deserve" protection.

Here is the significant language of the proposed clarification amendment:

(1) Prohibition of Discrimination. Neither the State of Colorado nor any of its political subdivisions shall discriminate against any person or group of persons in matters of employment, housing or public accommodations based upon sexual orientation.

(2) Prohibition of Special Rights. Neither the State of Colorado nor any of its political subdivisions shall establish a preferred legal status for any person or group of persons in matters of employment, housing or public accommodations based upon sexual orientation.

Exemptions. The following organizations and activities shall be exempt from all the foregoing provisions concerning sexual orientation: 1) Employers who have ten or fewer employees; 2) Household employees and babysitters; 3) A house leased for less than a year; 4) Apartment buildings with five or fewer rental units and part of which is occupied as a residence by an owner; 5) Owners or tenants seeking roommates; 6) All non-profit voluntary membership organizations; and 7) All churches and religious associations and their schools or educational institutions.

If you would like a full copy of the proposed amendment, call Citizens Project at 685-9899. ◆